

with respect to a pre-defined one (1) of said half-moulds:

- b) - said preform is locked in place with respect to an appropriate receptacle member (8) that is firmly joined to said pre-defined one (1) of said half-moulds;
- 25 c) - an appropriate small-tube assembly, which is comprised of an insert piece (10) and a respective stretching rod (11), is inserted in the mouth portion (6) of said preform;
- d) - said gripper (5) automatically disengages from the respective preform;
- e) - said pair of half-moulds moves into closing and clamping.

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10. Method according to claim 9, characterized in that the above cited phases d) and e) are adapted to be performed at least partially at the same time.

11. (Amended) Method according to claim 9, characterized in that the above cited phases c) and e) are adapted to be performed at least partially at the same time.

12. (Amended) Method according to claim 9, characterized in that said rotary central structure is adapted to support a plurality of pairs of said half-moulds, and that said five phases a) to e) are performed in an automatic, continuous and orderly sequence for said plurality of pairs of said half-moulds.